

Exploring psychological well-being in working family carers

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EXPLORING PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING IN WORKING FAMILY CARERS

Background

Enabling family carers to live well with dementia is a key UK policy objective (Getting in on the act, 2014). The abolition of the default retirement age (Age UK, 2015) means that there are likely to be increasing numbers of family carers who face the challenge of sustained care and work. Surprisingly little is known about the profile of the increasing numbers of working family carers for people with dementia. This study asks what factors associate with psychological health and quality of life for working family carers.

Methods

The study employs a mixed-methods approach using a two-stage process, to explore the psychological wellbeing of working family carers. In the first stage, structured questionnaires capture psychological wellbeing, everyday functioning (basic memory and attention) and work-life balance. In the second stage, in-depth semi-structured interviews introduce an object of discussion selected by working carers, to represent the work and life balance. Through interviews, carers discuss why they have selected the object, and prompted where necessary, to discuss successful examples of combining work and care, work and care conflicts. In this poster, we describe preliminary data from the qualitative (stage 2) study.

Results

Early qualitative findings suggest that organisers are essential for keeping on top of work and care commitments [.. *'synchronisation...that's enabled me to be where I'm supposed to be'*], particularly when the demands of work and care come into conflict. The support of others was another important factor which enabled one carer to balance both roles, where the support offered with care by their partner means that they: *'....could not hold down the job [...] without him'*. For working carers, employment also comes as a respite from the care role. However, current caregiving support practices were a source of anxiety: *'Nobody seems particularly interested in us. Yeah...we're just there doing it...until we can't'*.

Conclusions

Personal planners are frequently selected to represent the 'juggle' associated with balancing multiple roles, and have been synchronised with co-caring partners, to remain alert to tight and conflicting schedules. Ensuing interviews will reveal whether these early findings are common themes expressed by working carers in dementia care.